Shattering One's Reflection

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/1333297.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationships:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter, Will Graham & Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Alana Bloom, Jack Crawford, Brian Zeller, Jimmy Price, Beverly Katz
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - Fantasy, Alternate Universe - Dark, Alternate Universe - Magic, Alternate Universe - Creatures & Monsters, Alternate Universe - Different Powers, Spirit Animals, Spirit Guides, Wendigo, HEY YOU!, YEAH YOU!, YOU WANNA READ A WEIRD ASS STORY?, LOOK NO FURTHER, Hannibal is Hannibal, Possessive Behavior, Possessive Hannibal, OH FUCK WILL RUN, Poor Will, Winston feels, will's dogs - Freeform, writers are dicks and are going to do something shitty soon..., the writers are still dicks, and we are going to do something really shitty soon, I AM BACK, CLEAN UP YOUR SHIT AND HIDE THE BOOZE, CAUSE MAMA'S HOME
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2014-03-18 Updated: 2015-11-15 Words: 16,643 Chapters: 4/?

Shattering One's Reflection

by DarkmoonSigel, sku7314977

Summary

A trippy little AU where monsters are real, the FBI has a department to deal with them, and almost everyone has a power of some sort, except for Hannibal who is pretending to be something he is not.
Not Beta Read

Notes

Hello! Another collaboration between myself and the lovely sku7314977. You have only yourself to blame if you don't read it.

See the end of the work for more notes

No one knows they're lining up to go insane....

Chapter Summary

Chapter title from "Little Drop of Poison' by Tom Waits

The woman laid in a pool of her own blood, her face a grim parody of a smile. It ruined her once lovely visage. Will Graham looked down at her with gore encrusted knife still in hand, and tried to remember that he didn't kill her. A ghoul had, one newly turned by the looks of it, someone who had once been her friend, a person she had once trusted in life.

"She knew her killer." Will called out hoarsely. He wondered if he had screamed again. Sometimes that happened during reconstructions, when he was reliving the past thinking of others. He had taken off his gloves at one point, his hands covered in blood made stickier from congealing. He always seemed to be wearing red in some way or another.

A shuffle of movement let Will know that Jack and the others were still standing right outside the dead woman's bedroom. In a way, it comforted him to have people there even if he always worked alone. He had to. It was safer that way for everyone.

"You wanna tell me why you're holding the murder weapon and contaminating the crime scene?" were Jack Crawford's select words of comfort upon entering the room. He closed the door quickly behind him to keep the rest out for now. Startled, Will dropped the knife, having forgotten that he had been holding it at all.

"You know I work through touch." Will muttered, hoping Jack wouldn't notice how his hands shook as he tucked them out of sight. Shuffling back, he became aware that he was still crouching in the blood pool as well. Thankfully, his scarlet robes would hide most of the stains.

Like all empaths, rare as they were, Will had to wear the color of his class. The bright color of cardinals and warning signs held significant meaning. It was meant to repel others from him, told them to keep their distance. It was common knowledge that empaths did not respond well to touch. The same went for the person stupid or careless enough to do the touching. Safeguards were woven into all cloaks of orders and classes especially the red ones, little magics to keep power in and if necessary, others away.

"You've never had to touch the weapon before." Jack said with loaded concern. Will knew the man worried for him was at war with everything that went bump in the night, and Will was one of his best tools to catch the monsters with. "And if memory serves, you've actively avoided all kinds of contact with the deceased before. Now I find you standing over the victims with the murder weapon in hand. What's changed?"

“I got lost in the reconstruction.” Will bit out the words, his tone bitter. It was the closest thing to the truth though. It still wasn’t a good sign though, no matter how he phrased it.

“Will……you don’t get lost.” Jack said slowly. Will wondered if this was going to be another conversation that ‘didn’t happen’. They had been having quite a few of those lately.

“But I did…just for a second.” Will admitted shakily, damning as it was to do so. If he lost control, Will knew he could expect to spend the remainder of his life in a padded room, far away from other people. He would only get that outcome if he didn’t kill anyone by accident when he went nova. Will wasn’t big on social contact to begin with, but he loved his freedom.

“Go and get cleaned up. Take a break. We’ll talk more when you’re done.” Jack snapped as he flung the door open. With their team, Will knew that they couldn’t keep them out in the hall forever before something went awry.

Even now, Will could feel worried eyes upon him from others as Jack stalked past them, Will following in tow. Like hounds wanting to released, the alchemists wanted to unleash their skills, using their twisted science to find the killer. Beverly, Brian, and Jimmy were bright things spilling into the room, dressed in the golden robes of their order. They made Jack stick out like a sore thumb when he was among them, the dark robes of his office dull in comparison to Will’s and their own.

Once downstairs, Will was allowed a moment’s peace to wash off the blood, at least what he could. He kept his hands in the icy water longer than he should have, liking how it burned. It also gave Will a fleeting reason to ignore Jack for now.

“This has given me cause for concern.” Jack voiced as soon as Will turned off the tap, the words so impatient they were spoken to his back. Jack had a perfect view of how the muscles tensed up along Will’s spine from the verbal assault.

“Really, Jack? Cause for concern…Mm.” Will shook his hands dry to throw an incredulous look over his shoulder at Jack before putting back on his gloves. “You know what this does to me. What looking does. It’s not good for me.”

“Your bad luck that you’re the best.” Jack stated. “Are you breaking, Will? Have I broken you?”

The curious case and abilities of Will Graham had been a concern of the bureau for some time now. When Jack had proposed to bring the empath into his division, there had been considerable objection. Everyone knew that Will fell on the spectrum somewhere, more monster than man.

“Do you have anyone unbroken who does this better than me broken?” Will smiled, the expression etched into his face in a tragic manner. His humor always seemed to fall flat despite his best attempts.

“Fear makes you rude, Will.” Jack sighed, suddenly feeling as tired as Will looked. “You need help.”

“Who can help me, Jack? I’m ‘special’.” Will spat out the last word like it were bile. That damn word pretty much described his entire life. He was unique, the only one of his kind in a way. One of the most powerful empaths ever born, but unlike others of his kind though, he had been born without a spirit guide. It essentially made him a bomb ticking down without a clock.

No one knew why, but all telepaths and empaths were born with guides that acting like a source of stability and focus for them. A telepath’s companion was physical, usually an animal of some sort, though trees and plants had been used in certain cases. Their guides usually found them or were found by the age of two. Depending on what kind of animal it was, a telepath could have several guides in their lifetime.

An empath’s guide was always spiritual, and could manifest as anything, but did so at birth and stayed with them until death, the outline of the being present beside the baby at all times until the child had more control. In the curious case of Will Graham, he was the only known exception to this rule, and no one knew why. To his kind, he was like a ship without an anchor.

Telepaths methods lay best through touch, while empaths worked through line of sight. Whether due to lack of guide or not, Will could work through both. Because of this, Will wore his scarlet cloak and gloves at all times. False glasses over his eyes broke accidental line of sight as well. Unfortunately, none of it was working anymore for Will. The world was starting to seep in past the bone forts of his mind, and there was nothing he could do about it.

“That’s not true. There is therapy.” Jack pointed out to receive a sour look from Will.

“Therapy doesn’t work on me. I know all the tricks.” Will snorted. “And need I remind you of the last person who tried to get inside my head?”

Abel Gideon had once been a famous telepath, considered one of the best in his field. He had also been greedy and over confident. In one session, he had tried to force his way into Will’s head, past all his defenses, the considerable things that they were and there for a reason.

The result was like a round of Molotov cocktails hitting a pool of gasoline. Abel Gideon was never going to know who he was ever again. By meddling with Will’s mind, the end result had left his own a blank slate. People were still trying to piece back his identity for him, but all Gideon would do was sit in his cell and parrot back any stories they told him about himself. At one point, Abel Gideon had even believed that he had butchered his wife and her family on Thanksgiving.

An empath’s mind was like mirror. People gifted with this power would reflect back life, at least in some aspect. Sometimes it was just emotions, for other memories. For Will though, it was everything, the uniquely gifted man able to take on anyone‘s point of view whether they were living or dead. Instead of his mind being one mirror that could be directed, Will’s mind was a vast array of mirrors that were held and suspended at all angles to catch every point of light and dark he came across. Secrets came to him willingly, even the ones he had no wish to witness. He didn’t just reflect. He absorbed.

“No. I haven’t forgotten, Gideon.” Jack muttered. The only reason Will was not locked up with his former therapist was because Gideon had recorded his session with the equally famous empath, so his misconduct was not only obvious but documented. It had been ruled in Will’s favor that he had acted in self defense, but the ruling had drawn more critics down upon him. Using the guise of public safety, there were those who wanted to see Will under lock and key to study him.

“I need you to keep your head together until I can find a solution.” Jack said. His words made Will laugh, the sound of it low and almost heartbreaking to hear.

“Shake it off. Keep on looking. Got it.” Will chuckled dryly. They had a ghoul to catch after all. No rest for the wicked, he supposed as Will reentered the house to hunt down something he could make contact with. The answer to the ghoul’s identity lay in the dead woman’s past, in the shattered mirror of her blank eyes.

Jack watched Will go with a worried look on his face.

OoOoO

“You promised you’d cover him, Jack!”

Jack winced despite himself at the verbal barrage, each word weighted with power. The peacock echoing the complaint didn’t help matters either. Alana was furious enough to let her control just begin to slip, her animal companion voicing it loudly in tandem. He didn’t know if she was doing it intentionally or not, her rage an almost tangible thing or that could have been her just projecting onto him. Alana being a telepath, it was entirely possible, but it was probably hurting more because Jack knew deep down that she was right. He had promised.

“I am doing my best, but I need your advice on how.” Jack tried to placate the powerful woman who leaned up against his desk to loom over him. The peacock spreading its wings and tail menacingly further impressed that image upon him.

“Take him out of the field.” Alana snapped, crossing her arms over her chest with an air of finality.

“You know I can’t do that. I need him in it.” Jack sighed in frustration. This conversation was already turning back into old territory. The two of them had always been at odd about Will’s placement. Usually the man just taught at the academy and was perfectly safe doing that, though his skill set was being woefully underused there in Jack’s opinion. “He’s saving people’s lives.”

“What about his life?! Will isn’t just some tool you can use until he breaks!” Alana fumed as she reached up a hand to soothe her guide, something that Jack was very grateful for. Peacocks could get exceptionally loud.

“So help me keep him together.” Jack said, taking even deep breathes. Alana’s control was slipping, the weight of her anger bearing heavily down upon him.

“Let him quit.” Alana said, easing up.

“I told him he could. He decided to continue.” Jack told her, which for the most part was true. He was careful to leave out his part of that conversation.

“Damn it, Jack!” Alana was quick on the uptake though, already having a good idea in mind about how that went. “Fire him then.”

“Fire my top empath profiler? Freddie Lounds would have a field day with that. My bosses and Will’s critics as well.” Jack growled out, growing weary from the tide of Alana’s power. It was beginning to wear on his training. The two glared at each other for a moment.

“Look…” Jack broke the standoff between them first. “Will needs a support system. You’re his friend…”

“And that’s all I can be to him.” Alana interrupted, already knowing where Jack was going with this. “My own nature works against me in this area.”

Telepaths and empathy did not mix well. Telepaths projected. Empaths absorbed. Push and pull. In a standoff between the two, it was only a matter a time and power level whether it was the prism or the mirror that shattered first. It complicated matters further that Will could do both.

“There has to be someone…” Jack sighed.

“Oh!” Alana perked up, her face alight with an idea.

“Oh good or oh bad?” Jack mused, really hoping for the former.

“I just might know who.”

OoOoO

“I hate being this neurotic.” the low level empath sobbed as he reached for yet another tissue. Biting back a long suffering sigh, Hannibal knew this was the reason he kept the box on his side. To make matters worse, he couldn’t eat Franklin. The man was a patient, and besides that, Hannibal had standards.

“Your empathy, as low level as it is, causes your anxiety to run abnormally high. Your brain is not meant to deal with such high concentrations on a constant basis.” Hannibal worked to keep the boredom out of his tone, hitting professional evaluation levels perfectly.

Much to Hannibal’s annoyance, Franklin sobbed in answer, blowing his nose messily into the tissue to drop the soggy mess onto Hannibal’s glass top table. Hannibal’s sanguine eyes flickered from the snot rag to the empath and back again, hoping that Franklin would take the hint for once in his life, that his empathy would be good for something. It was a futile gesture of course, but Hannibal considered himself to be an optimist.

“Franklin…” Hannibal said solemnly enough to get the man’s full attention. “When the lion is in the room, you will know it.”

Which was one of the most bold faced lies Hannibal had ever uttered, the wendigo smiling to itself. He was a wolf in sheep's clothing, or more accurately, a monster wearing a very well tailored person suit.

With Franklin's session finally over, and not a moment too soon in his opinion, Hannibal escorted the man out. Franklin had a tendency to linger otherwise if he did not actively show the man to the door. Settling in behind his desk to catch up on some sketching, Hannibal was interrupted by an unexpected knock on his office door. Glancing at his ledger and his watch for confirmation, Hannibal wondered who it could be as he answered the door. His patients were a select few, Hannibal catering to Baltimore's elite who were the only ones who could afford to pay his fees. To his pleasant surprise, Hannibal found Alana Bloom there waiting for him with peacock perched on her shoulder.

"Do you have an appointment?" Hannibal asked severely, his tone intentionally grave.

"Do you have a beer?" Alana countered, smiling widely back at him. The force that she was made Hannibal grin back.

"Come in." Hannibal invited, delighted with his company. Alana was one of the few humans he could stand and actually enjoyed keeping company with. She was entertainment, not duty or food, even if her peacocks could be noisy at times and she had the tendency to name them all Flannery.

"This is unusual. What brings you to my office at this time of day?" Hannibal asked as he handed his former student a tall glass of dark beer.

"I have a favor to ask but one I think you'll find interesting enough to say 'yes' to." Alana said, humming in pleasure into her drink after her first sip.

"I'm already intrigued. Do tell." Hannibal prompted, hoping it was something actually worth his time and attention. He got bored so easily, but Alana didn't ask favors from him often though. It might be in his best interests to comply for now.

"I have a friend. A very special friend, someone that I would like to protect. He needs help and I would like you to meet him." Alana said slowly, trying to choose her words well. She knew Hannibal appreciated words.

"Are you trying to set me up on a date?" Hannibal arched a brow at her as he poured himself a glass of red wine. "Because I have to tell you while I am flattered, my social calendar is rather full…"

"No, no, no. I mean as a patient. Kinda…Sorta." Alana interrupted. Hannibal could forgive her for that because she looked so flustered, her cheeks flaring red.

"A sort of patient?" Hannibal asked instead.

"A patient in an unofficial capacity." Alana amended.

"Whatever for?" Hannibal said, his curiosity getting the better of him.

“He doesn’t like psychiatrists…or doctors, for that matter.” Alana said, taking a long sip of beer to buy herself some time.

“Well, that does make things rather difficult.” Hannibal chuckled, taking a moment as well to scent his Amarone. “Why is this person so important to you? What makes him so special?”

“It’s not like that. He’s just a friend.” Alana sighed. Her words didn’t sound very convincing, even to her.

“Just a friend?” Hannibal teased with a slight smile.

“Stop that. Behave, doctor, or I won’t tell you the interesting part.” Alana feigned a glare at him. Hannibal motioned for her to cease her stalling and continue. “He’s an empath without a spirit guide.”

That information gave Hannibal reason to pause. “That’s…very unusual.” he allowed, at full attention now. “But you know I don’t work with children.”

“He’s not a child. He works for the FBI.” Alana fought to keep her expression neutral so she wouldn’t break out into a grin.

“As what?” Hannibal asked despite himself, scenarios flashing through his mind.

“As a profiler who specializes in unusual deaths.” Alana already knew the war was won. As a whole, Hannibal could be hard to read, but his focus was impossible to miss.

“And he’s not insane?” Hannibal offered up, shocked at his own surprise. He had been expecting someone stationed behind a desk, enduring the normal stress of long hours and too much paperwork.

“No, but he’s well on his way the rate Jack Crawford keeps pushing him.” Alana muttered, her expression turning immediately grim as they got to the heart of the matter.

“I’ll make him an appointment.”

OoOoO

Unlike most of his patients, new or old, Will Graham did not sit across from him, or even try to use any of Hannibal’s beautiful and very expensive furniture. Dressed fully in his scarlet cloak that covered him from head to toe with the hood pulled up to hide his head, the empath currently looked very much like a grumpy cardinal roosting overhead, peering at Hannibal through railings. Upon entering Hannibal’s office, Will had immediately climbed up the ladder to the library and was quietly refusing to come down until their session was over.

“Are you comfortable? Would you like me to bring you a glass of water?” Hannibal called up. At the moment, he was letting things lay where they lie. Hannibal sat himself behind his desk, giving the impression that he was more intent on catching up on his paperwork than sparing any attention to his current company.

“I’m only here because Alana made me promise to come see you. I don’t have to talk to you.” Will grumbled back, sounding petulant about the whole ordeal.

“As am I.” Hannibal said, peeking at Will in his peripheral. His comment seemed to perk the reclusive man’s interest, the top of the cloak popping into clear view to glower down at the doctor.

“I only agreed to see you because Alana made me promise as well.” Hannibal explained further. “I have no interest in conversing with you either.”

“You’re friends with Alana?” Will sounded like he was curious even though he didn’t want to be.

“Yes, though I was her mentor before that. I hold her in high regard, enough so to let her work her will on me. As you know, she can be very persuasive.” Hannibal kept his tone light as he signed papers and skimmed over his notes. “I was hoping to keep that promise to its fullest by speaking with you.”

“I don’t find you that interesting.” Will’s head disappeared from view again.

“You could with a little effort on your part. Most people find they do in some aspect.” Hannibal said, leaning back in his chair to regard Will who shifted and bobbed back into view.

“Do I hear narcissism?” Will shot back from the railings.

“Self confidence is healthy.” Hannibal countered, wishing he could get a good look at his patient. He could see a hint of a stubbly chin from time to time, but everything else was hidden behind material and shadow.

“I wouldn’t know.” Will grumbled, taking to pacing. He could never keep still for very long.

“See. We are already starting to make progress.” Hannibal chuckled, watching the empath wander about and study book titles.

“So what are you, Doctor? Animal, vegetable, or mineral?” Will asked the tomes, but loudly enough for the living to hear him as well.

“Pardon me?” Hannibal’s brow furrowed.

“Don’t be coy. What’s your power?” Will asked bluntly, turning around rapidly enough to flair out his cloak’s edges like they were wings.

“Can’t you tell?” Hannibal challenged, wondering how much of his true nature the extraordinary empath could pick up on. The distance Will had already put between them bespoke of an unconscious need for advantage and safety. Whether Will allowed himself to acknowledge it or not, a part of him already knew that the proverbial lion was in the room.

“Usually I can. You’re difficult to read.” Will leaned forward as much as he dared over the railing, like his current proximity would get him a better read on Hannibal. “You’re like a

moving shadow suspended on dust and not enough light."

"How does that make you feel?" Hannibal asked in amusement, already knowing how cliché it sounded. Will didn't seem to appreciate his humor though. He was delighted with Will's evaluation of him.

"How does it make you feel?" Will shot back with contempt, edging away from the railing again.

"Comfortable. It sounds like you haven't completely made up your mind about me." Hannibal said. For all Will's lack of social graces, he could speak prettily enough. When he made associations, they were interesting. There was an intelligence there, extremely guarded but definitely present. "The reason you can't sort out what I am is because I am a null, a Negate being a proper term for it. I take away other people's powers for a short period of time while they are in my close proximity. I can make them go away longer with physical contact, though not permanently."

That pretty little lie got Will's attention again, the empath's pacing becoming quicker in step with nervous energy.

"Nulls are rare." Will pointed out when he finally came to a standstill.

"Empaths without guides are even rarer." Hannibal countered to watch Will quaver between questions, needs, and wants.

"Do you think that it would work on me?" Will asked hesitantly, the hope there sounded strained and painful.

"The effect would only be temporary. At best, I could only offer you a reprieve from yourself, not a solution." Hannibal said with great care. He couldn't risk being found out this early in the game.

Nulls or Negates were indeed very rare which was why Hannibal had chosen to emulate one. Not a lot was known about nulls because half the time, they didn't know it themselves and could pass off as a normal people. A null could live their entire lives without ever knowing about their power.

As a wendigo, his powers were greater than most humans so Hannibal just tended to ignore the effects or just overwhelm them entirely with his own nature. It was one of the reasons he picked and chose his patients.

"How did you find out you were a null?" Will asked, the empath stuffing his own personal hurt back in its box. He already knew no one could save him from himself.

"From an unfortunate event that occurred during my childhood. You'll forgive me if I do not go into detail about it." Hannibal answered smoothly. "And yourself?"

"I've always known what I am. What I am missing." Will mouthed out the words bitterly. He was a lock without a key. He was incomplete.

“And what are you?” Hannibal pressed, curious to hear what Will would say about himself.

“Some say ‘special. Most whisper ‘freak’. The general consensus is that I’m going to go insane.” Will shrugged, and perhaps he was. He sometimes saw himself as a man without a paddle floating in a canoe in the middle of a great lake, destined to never touch shore.

“What do you think?” Hannibal gauged.

“That I have a shelf life and am I rapidly approaching my expiration date.” Will said sardonically. “Hence why I am here. Seeking therapy. Jack thinks I need a support group. Alana thinks I need a therapist.”

“How would you feel about a friend instead?” Hannibal asked, enjoying how he could make the man overhead pause. The hood turned to regard him, the tilt of it denoting that he had Will’s attention.

“Come again?” Will sputtered out.

“We could just socialize like adults. Perhaps even act friendly with one another?” Hannibal proposed, watching Will edge toward the railing again.

“How do you see me?” the empath asked, his tone wistful.

“Alone and lonely.” Hannibal answered as bluntly as he could without hesitation. He knew Will would appreciate the honesty.

“Yup, that’s me in a nutshell. Well spotted.” Will leaned back to slow clap but did not depart again.

“As am I.” Hannibal told him causing Will to grow very still at the admittance, which was truer than he knew.

“But you’re…” Will began, gesturing down at Hannibal who echoed it.

“I’m what?” Hannibal picking up where Will had trailed off. “For someone who doesn’t like to be judged, would you do the same and condemn me because I wear a suit and like do my job well?”

“Touché. Well played, Doctor Lecter. You have made your point. What are you proposing?” Will said at last, his tone of voice subdued.

“Just a series of conversations. Nothing more, nothing less. You’re not my patient. I am not your doctor. I’m just someone you can talk to when you feel like you need it.” Hannibal offered, the taste of victory already sweetly glazing his mouth. The trap was being locked and loaded. All the fly had to do was come into the spider’s parlor. He would be feasting soon enough on this man.

“Friends don’t make appointment with one another.” Will said, still putting up some resistance.

“Yes, they do. They call it breaks, lunch dates, and nights out.” Hannibal corrected. At Will’s power level, he would satisfy Hannibal for weeks, perhaps even months. “If it helps, you are welcome to come see me at my home instead of the office.”

“Are you sure about that? You could be inviting a killer into your home.” Will said, the warning making Hannibal smile.

“I’ll take my chances.”
OoOoO
TBC

You'll never get a wish from a bone...

Chapter Summary

Will get's lonely and lost, and decides to take Hannibal up on his offer. Hannibal decides it's time for dinner. 'cue scary music'
Not Beta Read

Chapter Notes

Just read it. You know I rarely kill off characters, and that I tag my stories appropriately.
Not Beta Read.
Title is from 'A Little Drop of Poison' by Tom Waits.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The world was a broken thing at night with all of the creepy crawlies coming out of the woodwork and the rot. Will's time awake was starting to blend in together with his nightmares to make his existence a waking dream. It was getting to the point that he couldn't tell the difference between imagining and reality anymore. Will felt like he was sleepwalking through life, not knowing when he was really awake anymore.

Tonight was no different. A girl had been left to bleed out on a bone tree made of antlers. She perfectly fit the profile of seven other missing girls, none of which had been found. Will had been called in by Jack to look at her, to see her killer and know what kind of monster it was.

"There was something wrong with the meat." Will muttered, running shaky hands down his face. He wanted to throw up, getting a glimpse at what had torn out this girl's liver only to stuff the organ back into her cooling body.

"What kind of monster does that?" Jack demanded, circling the girl like her corpse personally offended him. Will supposed that it did in a way.

"It's not. It's just some cannibal." Will muttered, wishing his words sounded more absurd and less causal. He pulled his cloak over his head to hide his face from the others. It did nothing to stop the vicious replay of events in his own mind. He was killing this poor girl over and over again, her death rattle echoing through him as he strangled the life out of her. "It's just a guy."

"A man, like a human man? We can't waste time on this. Give whatever you find to the local PD or another department." Jack said in disgust, the agent not a happy man. He hated having

his time wasted on normal killers. He had called Will in because he had thought for a hot moment that this might have been the work of a supernatural killer known as the Chesapeake Ripper. There was always one that managed to get away, and work themselves under the skin. In this case, the Ripper was Jack's own personal white whale.

"No, it wasn't. Well, not entirely human anyway." Beverly crowed from over the corpse, triumphantly holding up a sliver of twisted metal. It glowed a sickly shade of green from whatever spell she was using.

"He's a necromancer, or at least he's working himself up to be." Brian informed them, narrowing his eyes at the evidence as he drew glowing sigils into the air around it to have them flare back at him.

"And that puts that ball back in our court." Jimmy said, setting a ring of fire ablaze around the dead girl to cast her body in strange twisting shadows and light. It died down instantly with a wave of his hand, the alchemist reading information from the ash. "There is your proof."

"You got a visual on this guy, Will?" Jack sighed, seeing a whole lot of paperwork in his future.

"No. His features and form are blotted out. I get an impression…an intent. I understand his thinking, but nothing more than that. The necromancy must be corrupting his soul, turning him into something different, something I am unfamiliar with. That kind of thing can distort. Death magic is unpredictable at the best of times." Will reasoned out aloud, tilting his head back in thought as he tried to recapture what had aligned itself to his senses. This killer was still not too far gone, more man than monster yet. Whoever this was, he was killing out of love, not instinct. The concept and twisted reasoning behind it was making Will's head hurt. The intense love for another, someone close to this cannibal and held in high regard, was strong with this one.

"So we still have nothing. No bodies, no parts of bodies. No clues expect for her." Jack said, glaring at the dead girl. His complaints made Will stiffen.

"Then go hire an oracle if you don't like my answers. Better yet, come up with your own for once. You're the head of the department." Will muttered, regretting his words as soon as they left his mouth. He knew it was bad when even Brian was rendered speechless. Beverly's mouth was agape while Jimmy looked like he was trying not to laugh. Will very carefully avoided looking over at Jack. He could already feel the anger coming off of the man, his empathic powers giving it sound and clarity inside his head.

"I didn't hear that!" Jack bellowed, giving the newest nightmare of Will's mind life.

"I'm sorry, Jack. I'm just tired." Will said as he turned away and started to walk off, gathering his cloak close about him.

"Where are you going?" Jack yelled after him, but stayed where he was as he watched the empath make his escape.

“Home.”

OoOoO

His pack greeted Will enthusiastically, something he was very grateful for. He knew he was bordering on the boundaries of animal hoarding, but he needed this unconditional love, this lack of judgment. His pack couldn’t take the place of a guide, but their minds were simple, easy things to surround himself with. Of course, he was compensating for the lack of others in his life. Will knew he was, but it was better than going crazy.

Alone and lonely.

That was how Hannibal had described him. It should have made him angry. Instead, it just made Will feel tired. There was too much truth in those words to be ignored or dismissed. Will kept telling himself that they were not the reason he was picking up the phone and dialing Hannibal’s numbers.

OoOoO

“Ah Will, please come in. Dinner is almost ready.” Hannibal greeted Will upon opening the door to his impressive home.

“You didn’t have to cook for me.” Will told him in defense, crouching in his cloak as he pulled the heavy material closer to him like a shield. Though they were practically about the same height, but something about Hannibal that made Will feel small. He couldn’t quite place his finger on it.

“Nonsense. As much as I enjoy cooking, I love good company even more so this works out well for the both of us.” Hannibal said, standing aside to give the empath room when he noticed the man‘s hesitation. He couldn‘t risk Will running away now, not after making such leaps and bounds so early in their relationship. “May I take your cloak and gloves?”

“No!” Will said a little too loud and a little too quickly, securing his hood lower over his head to fully hide his face. “I’m sorry but no. It is better if I just leave them on. You don’t want to me touching you or vice versa.”

“You can if you want to.” Hannibal offered more amused than offended, though he had killed before for less. Will’s time would come soon enough. Until then, Hannibal simply wanted to see what the empath looked like. He was becoming bored with the few glances of unshaven chin and the mere suggestion of a mouth he got every once in a while.

“Excuse me?” The hooded man asked him in disbelief.

“You forget that it will have no effect on me being what I am, but if it makes you feel more comfortable, please feel free to leave them on. You are my guest, not my patient.” Hannibal told him in soothing tones, though it would be pity. He wanted to see Will in his entirety by his own free will. There were spells and incantations woven in the scarlet material, little incantations that muddled his sight and control, and it annoyed him. Compliance made the meat sweeter in Hannibal’s opinion.

Of all the powers that walked this earth, empaths were the most delicious, so full of feeling, like the foie gras of all the powers. With Will's pedigree, he would be like a golden goose. Being that he wasn't officially a patient with a paper trail or anyone knew where he was half the time mentally or physically, Will was the feast that presented itself. Anyone who knew him expected an unpleasant end to his story. Will was practically gift wrapped for the taking.

Confident that his offer would be taken up by the lonely man, Hannibal had been waiting for Will to call him. He had gleaned from conversations with Alana that the empath lived alone out in the middle of nowhere. Will's late, out of the blue call meant no one knew that he was here either. Out of good manners, Hannibal refrained from telling Will he was what was for dinner.

"Would you like anything to drink before we eat? A glass of wine perhaps? I have a bottle opened already." and already drugged and enchanted, of course. Hannibal led Will further into the house, the empath still hiding in his cloak.

"Sure, if it's not too much trouble." Will mumbled. He found he was at a loss, not knowing how to act like a proper guest. His manners were rusty at best, all learned from childhood and not really used since then either. He realized belated that it might be considered rude to keep his cloak and gloves on inside a house that wasn't a crime scene, especially around a host who wouldn't be affected by his power.

While Hannibal was busy with the wine, Will slipped all the red off, feeling almost naked without it to fold the cloak and gloves over the back of a leather chair. Probably not the right place for them, but well within Will's reach if he suddenly needed the layers. He felt on edge for some reason, all the little hairs on the back of his neck standing on end. While Will tried to reason with himself, Hannibal returned soon enough with wine glasses in hand to find Will dressed plainly in faded clothing, jeans and a flannel shirt.

"Sorry. I'm severely underdressed. I usually wear the cloak everywhere. No point in having nice clothing if no one can see them. People usually just see the red anyway…focus on it…" Will cringed, tangling his hands together to keep them from nervously flying about. He couldn't remember the last time he had been so stripped down in front of another person.

"Don't apologize. I'm honored and thrilled that you feel comfortable enough to do so around me." Hannibal practically purred, handing off a glass of tainted wine to Will. He was so pleased with this new development.

While pale and obviously not cared for by himself or other people, the empath was beautiful. With dark messy curls, delicate features, and clear blue grey eyes, Will had the visage Renaissance artists searched for all their lives in their muses. It was shame to hide such splendor, and Hannibal so loved his pretty things.

The spell in the wine worked well enough. No more than a few sips were needed before the nature of it kicked in. The induced sleep would feel natural though so that the victim would suspect nothing or try to fight its effect. As luck would have it, Will didn't know how to drink wine either. The man gulped the drink down, his nervous nature seeking out the escape and ease alcohol brought with it.

“Wow, this is good.” Will licked his lips. All the wine he’d had in the past didn’t really compare. Even better, Hannibal was already topping off his glass for him without being asked to. Will was grateful for that, slugging down his second helping.

“I’m glad you like it. Take care though. It is strong.” Hannibal smiled into his own glass, taking a sip. The spell would have no effect on him, but Will had been accurate in his assessment. It was very good wine.

“I can feel that.” Will blinked, his head already feeling too light for its own good. He realized that slamming down a glass of wine or two on an empty stomach might not have been a good idea.

“Would you like to lie down? Dinner won’t be ready for a little while. Finishing touching and all that.” Hannibal offered, already setting his wine glass aside to take Will’s hand. The empath jerked back to avoid his touch, more out of habit than offense. Hannibal was not to be detoured though, catching Will’s hand in his own to hold it to him. The empath wasn’t in any position to argue or fight back, letting himself be lead to a couch in front of a fire. It was like heaven to be placed upon, Will going from vertical to horizontal without even knowing how he managed to accomplish such a feat all on his own. Letting himself sink into the plush cushion, the last thing Will saw before he closed his eyes was Hannibal looming over him, his skin black as soot and his head horned.

With a sigh, Will fell fast asleep.

Shaking his head at the unconscious empath, Hannibal knelt down beside him to run his hand through dark curls, soft fine things that felt like warm satin to the touch. It was time for the fun part, a bit of show before dinner.

OoOoO

Frozen in place upon entering Will’s mind, Hannibal stared wide eyed all around him. Having entered many a mind before, the wendigo generally found that humans were dull things, unimaginative and easy to navigate for the most part.

And yet, he stood in a silver forest made entirely out of mirror shards and fishing hooks. As he looked around, Hannibal realized he had to reevaluate everything he knew about Will. Transforming to protect himself from the hostile environment, Hannibal took on his ravenstag form as he stalked through a razor wood, the gleaming leaves casting sharp light about in all directions. A blue moon high overhead was the only source of light in this place, casting eerie shafts of icy light about like sickles.

Even as a ravenstag, Hannibal found that he couldn’t go far, the wood shifting and moving itself all around him in subtle movements. The trees boxed him in with branches that tried to hook his flesh, and decided his path for him when he resisted. When Hannibal tried to forge his own way with lowered antlers, he discovered that the leaves were just as keen as they looked, easily sinking into his pelt to make him bleed black blood over steel and silver. Even his magic didn’t seem to have much effect, only blackening the glass and corroding the metal in places. It all kept pressing forward upon him despite his best attempts.

The triune part of Will's mind was a beautiful and terrible place, and it knew that Hannibal was dangerous. It was fighting back the best it could by forming its own trap for the wendigo all around the creature. When Hannibal was forced into a clearing of sorts, he wondered why he hadn't been struck down. The forest seemed quite capable of doing it all its own.

Stamping his hoof, Hannibal toyed with the idea of leaving this place, and trying again later. He would have to build a foundation of trust within Will to keep this sort of thing from happening again. If he could appease the empath's instincts, the man's death would be an assured thing. He could always just kill Will while he was defenseless and sleeping, but that lacked allure. Hannibal wanted to consume everything that was Will, and that included his mind. By killing him flat out before getting to the good part, it would be like having a truffle without its rich center. Hannibal was not in the habit of denying himself any sort of pleasure.

Just as Hannibal prepared himself to leave, it was Will who found him, and not the other way around. It was a disconcerting turn of events. Hannibal was used to hunting down his prey in their own minds, and eating them there before he consumed their flesh in the real world. He was supposed to the hunter, not the hunted. The reversal in roles did not sit well with him, the ravenstag huffing out mist and annoyance.

In the clearing that glittered madly like shattered diamonds, Hannibal stood still at its center. He let Will come to him, curious to see how Will would react to his intrusion. It might be worth be observing before he came to a final decision of exiting. Attacking Will would be unwise, what with the aware forest of keen blades all around them. Upon noticing him, most people screamed and fled, but Will just kept right on coming until the human stood before the ravenstag.

Curious, Hannibal peered down to find Will staring up at him with a look that was something akin to wonder and awe. In regard to one of his true forms, Hannibal had never seen such an expression before on another's face. Inexplicably, there was no fear there. Against all rational thought or reason, Hannibal watched as Will reached for him in almost a childish manner, touching his neck to gently stroke his feathered fur. Hannibal didn't know what was going on, his hooves locked in place with shock.

If that wasn't enough cause for concern, Will was crying. Tears were a natural part of fear, but those tears were accompanied by a stunning smile, one filled with such relief and so much love it almost physically hurt Hannibal to look at it. Love being directed toward him, all for him, the sides of his deer face being cupped by strong hands, and his dark crimson eyes peered into by stormy grey blue that glistened with unshed tears. He didn't even attempt to resist as his head was drawn downward so that Will could press his face to his own.

"Where have you been?" Will asked, his voice so kind and welcoming. He rubbed his moist cheeks against soft fur and feather, and wept a lifetime of questions into it. "What took you so long?"

Beneath Hannibal's hooves, the grass turned green and soft, losing its brittle sharp nature. The forest that surrounded them burst into vibrant color as mirrors shattered in on themselves to unfurl into the golden green shades of a emerald summer day.

"I've waited so long for you."

OoOoO

Back in the real world, Hannibal stared down at the empath. Instead of claiming his prize, Hannibal left Will peacefully sleeping on his couch, locked away comfortably in his own mind. Free of the empath's headspace at last, Hannibal studied the flesh he had planned to have for dinner.

Alone and lonely.

That was how Hannibal had described Will, and had inadvertently described himself. Perhaps he could change that. Eating Will was no longer an option. Hannibal was coming to a very important decision, one that would change everything for them both. He had still had time to make something before Will woke up, enough meat left over from his last kill to actually make something presentable.

When Will woke up, he would have his first taste of human flesh, but even more importantly, a taste of things yet to come.

OoOoO
TBC

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading. Your comments follow the ravenstag through Will's woods. Your kudos get eaten by the trees.

That little drop of poison....

Chapter Summary

> Will wakes up to have dinner with a wendigo, and meet someone new while going home.

Chapter Notes

> Hello all! Back again.
> This chapter was written by the lovely Sku. I am very grateful to her for doing so considering I left this story like an ugly baby at her door.
>
> Chapter's title is from 'Little drop of poison' by Tom Waits.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Head feeling hazy, Will awoke to the mouthwatering smells of roasted meat, spices, and rich buttery sauces. He found it odd those aromas were rousing his mind to the waking world, but it was no less alluring, though Will had no idea why they were present. He rarely had time to cook, and when he did, it was often just a fish fry and some grits. Nothing that smelled as good as this.

Stretching out limbs still heavy with sleep, Will blinked away grit from his eyes to be met with the unfamiliar sight of his surroundings, the décor bright with bold colors and expensive furnishings. Thanks to his dulled senses, Will had a moment of panic before he remember exactly where he was and whom he was visiting.

He was in Dr. Lecter’s home, and had the audacity to get drunk enough to pass out on the man’s couch while he was preparing dinner for Will. Having enough sense to know that he was being a terribly rude guest and this was why he couldn’t go to nice places, Will pushed himself up into a sitting position, feeling very self aware. He tried to ignore how flushed he seemed to be, or how warm his cheeks were getting, the temperature and color of his skin having nothing to do with the fireplace nearby. He knew he would have to seek out his host, and make some sort of amends for this breach in etiquette.

“Doctor Lecter?” Will called out as he wandered down dark hallways, listening for signs of life. He didn’t want to get lost in Hannibal’s house on top of everything, especially after passing out like that. Following his nose, Will found the other man soon enough.

With all the elegance of a trained chef, Hannibal garnished plates full of thick cuts of roasted meat serve in a rich, creamy sauce as Will looked on wide eyed. The food wasn't just something thrown together, like it would have been at Will's house. It was a production, having life and an art to it. Attractive sprigs of something green and flowery was placed atop what looked like some cut of beef as a garnish, acting as the centerpiece of each dish. Sides of vegetables and seasonal roots accompanying the entrées were bright in color and provided unique contrast to the meat.

"Will, there you are. Excellent timing, I have just finished dinner." Hannibal said in answer to watch with amusement as he was approached by the empath. Will's excitement was overriding his usual sense of self preservation, enough so it brought him rather close to the Wendigo. Will's nearness pleased Hannibal, more so than he wanted to admit to himself at the moment, the empath's kisses and honeyed words of welcome still fresh in Hannibal's mind.

"Doctor Lecter…I found him." Will tried to keep his voice from shaking with excitement and failed. He found he didn't care. To say the words aloud, the phrase Will thought he would never hear himself say in direct context to himself was awing. It was enough to bring tears to his eyes again, this time in actual waking. As he had been in his dream state, Will was unashamed to cry, not over this at least. This was life changing revelation, one that needed to be shared with someone else if only to bear witness to it. Will needed it to be real, needed to believe that it was real, to know that he was saved.

Feigning confusion, Hannibal turned to face Will, making a show of furrowing his brow. He left off of decorating the plates as if in concern to peer over at the empath with thoughtful eyes. "Pray tell, who did you manage to find? You have been asleep during the entirety of the dinner preparations, and there is no one else within my home save you and I." he said, spinning the lie around truth like a doomed fly in spider silk.

"No, not somebody tangible. I found him, Doctor Lecter. I found my spirit guide." Will grinned, finding it surprisingly easy to do. Taking his glasses that were more camouflage than useful, he blotted away tears with the edge of his sleeve, the edge of laughter clinging to his voice as unfamiliar feelings of elation rose and fell within him like strange tides.

"Oh…" Hannibal said ever so carefully, allowing his voice to take on an edge of surprise. He was a master of this sort of deception, his practice based upon it. "Well, that truly is unique. To my knowledge, it is also completely unheard of. This happened while you were sleeping? Why now?"

"I don't know. I don't know why now, but it's him. I know it is. it has to be." Will said quickly, filled with too much energy to keep still as he began to pace the kitchen.

"For whatever reason, he's finally found me. Maybe he was lost, or was searching for me all these years. I moved around a lot when I was a kid, following my dad from the boats yards of the Mississippi to the Great Lakes. I don't know…" Will stammered, knowing what Hannibal was saying to be true. Him finding his guide this late in life now should have been an impossibility. Insanity and isolation had been his more likely options up to this point.

“I’m sorry I have to go. I need to find him again.” Will said as he came to an abrupt halt. He wasn’t insane. Will knew his own kind of crazy and this wasn’t it. His spirit animal was real. Bolting from the kitchen with a mission set in his mind, Will retraced his step back to the sitting room to find his cloak and gloves, pulling the layers of crimson back onto his person.

“Will…” A hand caught Will’s shoulder as he began to fasten the bindings of his cloak. The unexpected touch upon his person caused the empath to flinch back out of habit. It took a moment for Will to realize that he was getting nothing off of the other man. It was enough to make Will freeze in his escape and stare over at his host in disbelief, Hannibal‘s hand still upon him.

“You must calm yourself. I am afraid in your excitement you may forget yourself while driving. Please eat something before you leave” Hannibal said quietly in such a reasonable voice it almost made Will wince. He realized he was being rude again, leaving in a rush like this after Hannibal went through all the trouble of making him a nice meal. The thought was enough to still the empath, but not enough to make him begin removing his coverings. He was still intent on leaving. It must have been obvious because Hannibal refused to let him go, keeping the empath in place with a deciding grip.

“You have enjoyed two glasses of wine that have taken more effect on your person than either of us have anticipated. You’re obviously distracted.” Hannibal said. “Stay. We will eat, and you can tell me of your encounter. Once you are sated, I will not stand in your way of leaving. I only wish to make sure that your return home is safe.”

Hannibal’s words obviously gained the results he wanted, Will nodding as he took into consideration the effects of the alcohol upon his system. Seeming to relax once more, the Wendigo delighted in taking Will‘s cloak and gloves from him. For Will’s peace of mind, they were folded neatly and returned to the back of the chair, close but kept well out of hand for sure.

With Hannibal’s hands still upon him…and wasn’t that a novelty, to be touched without fear from either participants…Will allowed himself to be directed toward a dining room. For his obedience, he was placed in a seat across from his host, Will examining the numerous types cutlery and glassware laid out around the place settings while Hannibal pour wine for himself, water for Will, and retrieved dinner for them both. Though he had never grown up using such a wide arrangement of silverware, Will doubted the assortment had been placed in its entirety for actually use and more so for principle. To his relief, Will recognized enough of the pieces to know which fork to eat his steak with without embarrassing himself.

“Now,” Hannibal began once they had both been seated and their plates were presented. Will was too much in daze to pay attention to the meal’s elaborate description when Hannibal had gone into detail about it. As far as Will was concerned, it was meat and potatoes, and he was good with that. “Eat your dinner and tell me all about this encounter.”

Try as he might to remain indifferent on the matter to keep this game going, Hannibal was curious about what part of his ravenstag nature had made Will accept him as his spirit guide and not as the threat that he was. Instead of answering right away, the empath seemed to drift, Hannibal watching as Will fell back into the memory of soft feathers and silk fur against this skin. A sharp twist in the Wendigo’s gut told him that he wanted to be there too.

“I felt him.” Will breathed out the words softly as the kiss that had lingered over Hannibal’s fur. He was recalleing the exact moment he had noticed another presence his mind, and it was all Hannibal could do not to shiver in response. “I was dreaming...I felt something pushing past the walls of my bone forts, invading me...”

That was an interesting bit of information for Hannibal to take note of. Will truly was special being if he had felt his presence. He thought he had been careful infecting Will’s mind, seeping in like a fever.

“It forced its way in and started wandering…” Will continued when Hannibal didn't say anything. Upon noticing the assault on his defense, Will had let his subconscious act as a persistent guide, guiding the intruder to him. Will wanted to meet the being foolish enough to try him before dispatching it. He had to know it was another mind interloping on him, or perhaps imprinted memory from another killer, or a new form of nightmare wandering through the forests of his mind.

“And then I found him...” Will smiled, because it still almost felt too good to be true. “A stag... it was a stag that forced its way into my mind…”

So much affection danced within the clear blue parts of those stormy eyes, a sort of love for a form that was Hannibal but wasn’t. He wasn't sure how to deal with that sort of devotion. “And how do you know that this stag was not something more symbolic? An imagining of your mind, perhaps?” he interjected, his curiosity finally getting the better of him. Hannibal tried to cover up his interest by taking a sip of his wine.

“He came to me with an intent.” Will grinned, feeling the rare expression widening across his face. It felt good to do so even if what he was trying to convey was hard to explain. “There was an intelligence in his eyes, a grace and elegance in his movements. I could feel him. He was curious about me. He was looking for me…”

“I see. You truly believe that you have found your spirit guide then.” Hannibal faked a smile at his former prey even though he wanted to curl himself around Will and never let him go. The empathy’s complimentary assessment of him was still ringing in his ears like a strange hymn. “It must come with great relief.”

“Why? Because now I’m not going to snap? That I might not reach my expiration date after all, and take out half a block with me?” Will scoffed, his good humor turning dark.

“No,” Hannibal amended. “Because now you are no longer alone.”

The comment seemed to take Will by surprise, eyes flashing over to meet maroon before averting again. “If you have found your spirit guide then people will have no more reason to fear you. You may find it easier to socialize with your peers upon its reveal.” Hannibal expanded on the thought.

It was obvious that Will had not considered the possibility of turning this event into a chance for socialization and acceptance, the empath deciding to distract himself by taking his first bite of the steak. “Oh wow, this is delicious.” he hummed around a mouthful of juicy meat.

Swallowing quickly, Will tried another bite, this time more generous with his forkful than before. “This is amazing. What is this?”

Pleased with Will’s enthusiasm despite his poor manners, Hannibal indicated the succulent Blue Fairy that gracing their plate. “Tonight we dine on steak filet with a port wine and Gorgonzola cheese glaze accompanied by cubed parsnips, carrots, and taro fried to a crisp and tossed with garlic oil, Parmesan cheese, and fresh rosemary.” Next he lifted his wine, scenting the heady aroma. “All paired with a lovely cabernet sauvignon.”

“You didn’t have to put yourself out for me.” Will said at a personal loss, honestly impressed by the talents of the chef in front of him, but feeling somewhat in his debt. “I don’t think I’ve ever eaten something like this before. It’s usually just whatever’s quick and convenient for me.”

“It was no trouble at all. I cook this way for every meal.” Hannibal explained, earning another look from his guest. “Food is one of the many pleasures of life and one of my few vices. I believe it should be celebrated and enjoyed. For that reason I take my time in the preparation of each meal so that it may be something special, like a piece of art, individual in itself.”

Will considered his plate again, wondering what the man must have for celebrations if this was considered casual dining. “I take it you don’t get a lot of take out.” was all Will could come up with. He couldn’t imagine the doctor pulling up to a drive thru for burgers, the image too obscene even for his active imagination.

“No.” Hannibal replied, preventing a look of disgust from escaping his mask. The very idea of over processed animal by-products and an over abundance of additives repulsed the picky wendigo, “I am very careful about what I put into my body, which means I end up preparing most of my meals myself.”

Nodding, Will finished his meal with a newfound enthusiasm for food. He hadn’t realized how hungry he’d been before, but now that he’d started eating, Will found he couldn’t stop, not until the plate was scraped. He stopped himself just short of licking the porcelain clean, realizing he would have to start carrying around protein bars of some kind if this was the sort of thing he could expect from his appetite coming back. Honestly though, it was like his body was determined to embarrass him in every manner imaginable while in the doctor’s presence.

“Sorry. I guess I was hungrier than I’d thought.” Will mumbled, glancing over to find that Hannibal was still eating his own food at a more normal pace. Apparently the good doctor didn’t feel the same need to gobble down his own food.

“There is no need to apologize. I assure you that I am flattered. There is still another steak if you would like some more.” Hannibal offered, well pleased with Will’s enthusiasm for the other…other white meat.

“No. No, thank you.” Will said quickly, though he was tempted. Glancing to an artistic clock that probably cost a small fortune from the looks of it, Will had to stop himself from jumping as he noticed the time. “It’s quarter to ten. How long was I out?”

“You did sleep for a brief period of time, but it did serve an admirable purpose.” Hannibal soothed as he finished his own meal, trying to calm down some of Will’s nervous energy. He could feel that his quarry was readying himself to leave his presence. The Wendigo did his best to tap down the disappoint that didn’t seem to mix well with his dinner. “I will not take offence if you have another commitment you must see to.”

“Yeah, they’re called dogs and I’m late feeding them.” Will shook his head, getting up faster than he meant to. It was amazing how some food and a little rest could make all the difference. Will was feeling better than he had in a long while. That could be due to his guide as well. The combination of all three was making Will practically giddy.

The dogs were in for a good run, Will finding his footsteps quick and light as the navigated what little he knew of Hannibal’s house to claim his cloak and gloves again. Hannibal followed close behind, not touching but his presence was definitely felt upon Will’s back.

“I’m sorry.” Will said as he collected up his color, not bothering to pull on the scarlet that marked him as something other. ‘I’ve been a horrible house guest. I need to go now, but thank you for dinner. It was really good.”

Something had to be said. Will knew he wasn’t going to be invited back, but the very least, he wanted to convey how happy this visit had made him, how grateful he was for it. He wasn’t given a lot of chances to socialize on his own terms, and this had been nice not having to wear his cloak and gloves. For other people’s safety and his own, Will always had a barrier around him. Thank to his nature as a Null, Hannibal had even been able to touch him without any ill side effects or negative reactions. Will couldn’t remember the last time someone had been able to do that.

“Perhaps next time you can stay for a drink when we’re finished.” Hannibal said as he saw his guest to the door. Just short of kidnapping the empath, Hannibal couldn’t think of any plausible way to make him stay longer. To his surprise though, his words were enough to make Will pause in his exit, obviously caught off guard by something said.

“Y-you’d have me over again?” Will stammered. The initial dinner invitation had been shocking, but an invite back was inconceivable, especially after his lack of social niceties, passing out on the couch, and his piss poor table manners.

“Of course. We are friends, are we not? Perhaps during your next visit, you can tell me some more about this guide of yours, and how things are developing between you.” Hannibal swiftly took advantage, laying down groundwork for his entrapment. Of course Will would expect rejection and avoidance. Most others treated him like a pariah so all he had to do was portray the opposite to keep Will off balance while Hannibal bound the empath to him.

“Yeah…” Will nodding, finding himself agreeing with the therapist, agreeing to see said therapist again. On top of that, he felt oddly pleased with the notion of seeing Hannibal again and even socializing. “I’d like that.”

Pleased with the peculiar but eventful outcome of this evening, Hannibal watched as Will climbed into his sun faded car and disappeared into the night. Before long, Will would be searching for his stag again when he slipped into sleep. Hannibal would be waiting for him

when he did, ready to wander the endless mindscape forest of green illusions that ran seamlessly along jagged glass.

OoOoO

The drive from Baltimore, Maryland to Wolf Trap, Virginia was a long one on the best of days. It seemed even more arduous now as Will drove home with the new found knowledge of what would be waiting for him later on. Nestled somewhere inside his mind was his guide, lurking and waiting for the nightfall of his slumber to emerge. Each minute of waking dragged like an hour because of this.

As he drove, Will wasn't sure whether he should be thanking Hannibal for prolonging his stay or not, though the man had ensured his sobriety before allowing him behind the wheel. Mind whirling with thoughts of Hannibal, strange wine and food, and the ravenstag, Will was finding it hard to focus. Cursing his impatience, something managed to catch Will's eye, a darting of movement, shadow, and the familiar presence of fur. Rolling down his window, Will slowed down the car to a crawl, keeping pace with the trotting diversion,

"Hello." Will said. He couldn't help but smile as he followed the stray. The canine spared him a glance but continued to wander down the road, a destination intent in its mind. For a stray, it was a healthy enough looking dog whose appearance was only marred by its mud matted golden fur, and an ugly makeshift collar and leash made from a frayed rope "Where are you going?"

Driving ahead a bit so that he could park the car in the road, Will popped open the glove compartment and grabbed a bag of treats. Pulled a meaty stick from its contents, Will crawled out the back of the car to put the tailgate down to sit upon it. He didn't want to frighten the dog away with the loud noises of slamming car doors or sudden movements.

"Hey.." Will called out to the stray as it caught up to him, catching its attention. Will broke off a piece of the treat, tossing it over to the dog in offering. Approaching the morsel tentatively, the stray scented the meat before tasting it. Approving of it enough to wolf it down, the dog lifted its head to consider the one who'd thrown it. It edged closer when more meat was presented.

"Come here, boy." Will coaxed. breaking off another piece. He drew the stray in a little closer. Its hesitation and nervous behavior spoke volumes to the empath of the dog's very unappreciative previous owners. "You don't need to be nervous."

Will held out the final piece of jerky, bringing the dog in close enough to smell the offering before licking it from his hand, giving Will the chance to sneak his fingers beneath the rope collar.

"Not around me at least." Will told the dog, putting some of his power behind the words to help settle the skittish animal. It worked like it always did, the canine pressing itself to Will's leg to have its ears rubbed. Will check the miserable excuse for a collar as he did just that. Much to his surprise, he actually found a tag of ownership in the form of name plate and very little else.

“Winston.” Will read aloud to have the canine rumbled back in reply. Will considered the little gold plate before pulling off it from its loop and tossing it away into the roadside ditch.

“Well Winston, how would you like to come home with me?” Will asked the newest member of his pack. Winston titled his head to the side as if in serious consideration before jumping up into the car. He seated himself down beside the empath like he was meant to be there, as though he had actually understood the question presented to him on some level.

“You’re smart.” Will praised, chuckling as he folded down the seats to give his guest more room to lie down before closing the tail gate. Now that he had company, the drive home didn‘t seem so long. It was a welcome distraction for his mind to focus on, Will already making mental lists. Winston would need a bath, and be introduced to the rest of his pack.

Though he was now officially dog hording, Will couldn’t really bring himself to care, not when he occasionally felt an affectionate lick placed to his elbow or the snuffle of a wet nose behind him. One of the few advantages of his gift was that he could communicate with animals down to a certain level and was able to read them back. It wasn’t an exchange of words by any means, but more like conversation made up of emotions in terms of color and sound. As far as socialization went, he did so far better with animals than he did people who were generally too complex and/or guarded to read constantly.

“You’ve been trained very well,” Will mused over a wet dog. Home now and elbow deep in suds, Will held his new friend in the designated doggie washing tub with an experienced hand. Layers of muck and filth were washed from his golden coat, the canine dried off with the same practiced ease. Winston offered up no resistance to his careful grooming, seeming totally at peace with Will.

“If I didn’t know better I’d say you want to be here.” Will smiled as he buried his face in clean fur. Wasn’t that a happy thought? In one night Will had both managed to find his spirit guide and enlarge his furry family. Its newest member seemed to want nothing more than to join his pack. Will didn’t think this night could get better even if Alana Bloom suddenly stopped being a telepath and showed up at his door looking for date.

Of all little surprises Winston seemed to bring with him that night, his introduction to the pack stood out the most in Will‘s mind. The other dogs openly accepted him, sniffing the sides of the ‘getting to know you’ cage. Nosing through the bars, they greeted Winston with tail wags and excitement like the new dog was an old pack mate, all while Winston sat patiently within and allowed each member of the pack to greet him. It made Will feel daring enough to open the cage door and let the newest member of his family wander out to greet the pack in turn, far sooner than he would have ever deemed safe before.

“You’re really something else.” Will mused aloud, more than pleased as he watched the pack play together, getting to know the newest member of their family until sleep made Will sway in place where he stood. At last, he was forced to bring the pack all inside for bed.

Tucked under his covers, Will watched the dogs pick out their beds and curl up amongst each other on the floor with the exception of Winston. The canine seemed determined to join Will in his bed. Breaking his ’no dogs in bed’ rule, Will allowed it this once, tired of an empty bed. It was something he was used to but he didn’t have to like it. The odds of finding anyone

who would have him were slim to none. Touching was usually an expectation in a relationship.

“Alright.” Will sighed, tangling his fingers in shaggy fur as a warm body curled into the curve of his own. “But only this this once. I’ll bring you home a bed tomorrow and then it’s the floor for you.”

Winston yawned back as if in compromise, gently nosing at Will before growing still in slumber. Finding that for the second time that day an easy sleep was taking him, Will noticed that the usual anxiety and insomnia was absent from his body and mind. His eyes were already drifting shut as remembrances of raven feathers and silken fur like snow flurries made of pitch floating through his headspace.

“So this is what it’s like…” Will murmured to himself as the last of his conscience left him. “…to have a spirit guide…”

OoOoO
TBC

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading. Your comments wanna sleep with Will in the bed. Your kudos whine for more treats.

I'll All Alone...

Chapter Summary

Will goes to look for his guide to find the Ravenstag missing.

Chapter Notes

SURPRISE, BITCH. I BET YOU THOUGHT YOU'D SEEN THE LAST OF ME.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Whether people were aware of it or not, there was a design to them.

For an empath of Will‘s unique caliber, falling into a dream or a mind whether be it his own or not were very similar experiences, and yet very different endeavors. Dreams were more a story created by the unconscious mind rifling through the day’s past and present events, much like a hoarder trying to arrange its home’s contents in short order. The headspace of the conscious was simply more focused, ready for tea and company while keeping all the mess safely tucked away in the back.

The mind’s realm was created and sustained by thoughts, feelings, and direct and indirect influences. Inner defenses and raised walls were reflection of the mind they belonged to, borders within imaginary but ever changing due to perceptions. A dreaming mind was the twilight kingdom of a person, holding a malleability and unpredictable nature. It was limited only by the imagination of its owner.

At Will’s power level, his mind could be an escape of lush forests and clear, flowing waters, or a night terror of twisted fishhooks and jagged mirrors. It was all under his control to an extent within the area of his bone cage, but the core of his power had a life of its own. It had the potential to corrupt his private little world into something beyond his control. His empathy made it less his own some days, making Will a prisoner and victim to its moods. Some days were worse than others, Will having to wade through the memories of the monsters and the dead alike, the empath slogging through it like stagnant water to get where he really wanted.

It would appear not so tonight, Will was relieved to find out as he stepping through soft undergrowth, hoping to permanently change that. With the help of his guide, Will would finally have his lighthouse built on bedrock perched off his edge of infinity. His little boat lost out on a sea of blood and chaos would have something to guide him back to the shores of sanity.

“Where are you?” Will called out, wandering through the thicket of his mind in search of his new friend. Though inexperienced in the ways of a guide, Will thought that finding the ravenstag would be an easy endeavor, based on all that he had read and been told by others. Alana certainly never had a problem locating her peacocks or the birds her. It was proving itself not to be, much to the empathy’s growing dread. Try as he might, Will couldn’t feel the strange animal’s presence wandering within his head the way it had before. It was almost like it had fled him.

Pushing back sharp prickles of fear that made the hair on the back of his neck stand on end, Will searched out the clearing he had driven the ravenstag to before, the trees parting to create a path. Coming to its center, Will concentrated on mapping out the planes of his inner self, letting his consciousness drift over every blowing leaf and rough tree root in search of the ravenstag.

Rising panic turned the wood back to shattered reflections and sharp edges, Will finding that he was alone, the only presence within this bone fort his own. “No, you were here…” the empath whispered. Desperate, Will reached out again to scrape at his own edges, sending out claws made from desperation to rake at his ends.

“I’m alone.” Will made himself voice the terrible words, knowing that they were true as panic rose up to consume him. He’d been abandoned by the ravenstag, the only being who could have saved him. Will’s expectations and hopes had run perilously high, making the quick stop and drop of abandonment feel all that much worse.

The dead woke from somewhere deep within, his terrible ability turning against Will, monsters not of his making beginning to seep in with the shadows, bleeding out from the leaves turned wicked glass. Too many witnessed designs rose from the shallow graves Will had buried them in. They began to overlap, seemingly intent on ripping apart what little structure he had left of his sanity.

A sound came from the darkness though, cutting through the growing human horror. It was high pitched, and try as he might, Will could not ignore it. He found he didn’t want to. A dog was crying, high pitched and sharp like a bitch looking for a lost pup. It was that whimper that made Will open his eyes in the real world to the sensation of wet dog kisses and a cold nose poking at his cheek.

“Winston?” Will croaked out, still shaking off heavy sleep and lingering tendrils of dreamscapes. Wrapping an arm around the persistent canine, Will buried his face into Winston’s side, golden fur still smelling damp and very doggy from a much needed bath. More licks found the empath’s face as the newest member of his family checked him over with concerned whimpers and whines.

“It’s okay,” Will lied, focusing his empathy on the dog in his arms to let the soothing love and concern of the canine flood his senses, overwhelm them. It calmed his raging mind and panicked heart almost instantly, Will flooded with a calm so vast it hollowed him out so that he felt comfortably void. It was so sudden and unexpected, Will felt almost dizzy from the sudden absence of pain. “He’s gone, Winston. I can’t find the ravenstag. It’s like he has abandoned me…”

In response, more licks warmed Will's cheek, wetting the skin with something other than sour sweat. A startlingly loud bark summoned the rest of his concerned pack to bed, puppy piling the sensitive empath with love and devotion from his little, self-made family. The pack crowded the small bed, piling atop and around the empath in a mountain of furry warmth.

Will couldn't help the laugh that bubbled up from his throat, a small smile pulling at his lips as he reached to scratch and pet every dog within reach. Ignoring the discomfort of cold noses being pressed to his bare flesh and warm drool running over his feet, Will lay back down to stare up his ceiling in a far better state of mind than expected. Eventually, sleep reclaimed him, and to his surprise, Will went willingly, returning to his hidden forests of lush green and open skies. The pack played beside his stream, wading in and out of the water to chase after each other. Sitting down to watch the dogs frolic, Will was joined by the newest member of his pack, Winston sinking down at his side like it was the most natural place in the world for the canine.

Petting soft golden ears, Will lost himself to dreams for once in this rare, peaceful space.

OoOoO

Sitting in the quiet darkness of his Baltimore home, Hannibal searched for his intrusive path back into the empath's forest, feeling for the edges of Will's mind as he looked in vain for his opening. What he found instead left him mildly annoyed, the wendigo not used to being denied access to his quarry, but even more so, curious.

"What is this?" Hannibal asked to be left unanswered, examining the new structure that barred his way. A wall made of some indeterminable material now blocking his path back to Will.

"Are you building forts to keep me out?" The wendigo mused, the door he had made now sealed to any further intrusion.

In Hannibal's mind though, doors were meant to be open, and a locked door was merely a puzzle of sorts, the question being whether the lock should be picked, the key acquired, or the shit kicked in. Not one to be so easily detoured, Hannibal pushed against the wall, touching a clawed hand to the barrier's seam. Pressing at it to put his weight behind it, Hannibal was surprised to find that it pushed back, a small tremor of power shoving his hand away. Testing it out further, Hannibal ran his hands over the surface here and there to feel surges to match his testing with a strength to match his own.

Bemused, Hannibal tilted his crowned head as he weighed his options, intrigued by this new development of Will Graham's mind. At least the empath wasn't boring, but Hannibal had had plans intended for Will tonight. Hannibal decided that some impatience on his part might be in order. The nightmare creature raised a hand of daggers and drove it into the barrier before him, putting considerable power behind the strike. The like of which had dropped a great number of creatures in the past.

The backlash was blinding, a magic and light unfamiliar to the wendigo being directed back at it, sending Hannibal immediately back to his body in the waking world with a shudder and

a grunt of pain. He felt singed around the edges, but had retreated back in time to save himself from any further damage.

Marron eyes flared open, the mind behind them racing with the possibilities of this new development. Something or someone was blocking his way. That much was certain. Either William had figured out his ruse and had been expecting him, or his subconscious had somehow knew that Hannibal was something darker than the guide Will suspected him to be. It would be intent on keeping the wendigo at bay until the rest of Will caught up, much like a parasite protecting its host.

A small smile pulled the corner of his thin lips, revealing jagged teeth best left hidden to keep others from wondering about him. Will Graham was turning out to be far more interesting than he had anticipated. The more Hannibal delved into the empath, the more fascinating the man became. Will was a challenge, something rare for a being of Hannibal's age and power to find. Something well worth his time and attention.

"I should send Alana a bottle of Pinot Noir." Hannibal decided. He had learned much this evening. Though his plans had been foiled, there would be other nights, other chances. Hannibal was nothing if not patient. All good things to those who waited, and Hannibal could wait a very long time.

OoOoO

Even in his classroom Will was lost, distracted with thoughts of that which was missing, what should had been his from birth. Will had been so sure that his guide had finally come to bring him guidance and structure to an otherwise crumbling mind, but after last night, after finding his forest empty and the source of his comfort gone, Will realized he was just meant to be alone. Last night's events was just another reminder that he was expiring at a rapid rate, the proverbial Humpty Dumpty. All the king's horsemen, the FBI, and Jack weren't about to put him back together again. If it hadn't for Winston's timely intervention, Will was sure he would have waded out into his stream one last time to make it all stop for good.

Unable to focus, Will offered up a basic lecture to his students about the differences of empathetic and telepathic psychoanalysis profiling, ignoring the questioning hands of inquiry. He taught the class on auto pilot with zero fucks given about actual education.

"Rehearsing?" Came the sound of a friendly voice, familiar enough to at last pull Will's consciousness back to the forefront. The classroom, Will realized belated much to his chagrin, was empty. Looking around, Will found that the only occupants were himself and Doctor Bloom. "It sounds good. Not everyone realizes the importance of knowing the differences between an empath and a telepath, the different profiling strategies needed."

"Yeah," Will recovered, rubbing his eyes to erase telltale signs of his embarrassment and apprehension, "Sorry, I didn't see you come in. Is there something I can help you with?" He forced a crooked smile, focusing his line of sight on her left earring. The hoops attractively matched her boldly patterned dress.

Alana smiled, well used to her friend's lack of eye contact. She knew he was trying, could feel it tickling the edges of her own power as her peacocks ruffled their feathers in

amusement. “I felt the need to be nosey so this is me being nosey. I was wondering how everything went with Hannibal. He mentioned to me that you came over for dinner, though he was a polite miser and kept all the details to himself.”

“It went…um…it was fine.” Will wasn’t exactly proud of his behavior in regard to Hannibal, either in the office or at the man’s house. He’d all but insulted Hannibal upon meeting him, refusing to come down from the upper levels of the psychiatrist’s library and had made a glorious follow up performance as being a terrible guest, passing out drunk on Hannibal’s couch.

“He’s agreed to see me in an unprofessional capacity.” Will offered up instead so he won’t have to go into detail. Will busied himself cleaning up his desk and packing his bag to avoid adding more to that. Especiallywhen he felt Alana not taking the information as well as he would have liked, his damnable empathy cluing him in.

“I’m sorry, an unprofessional capacity?” Alana furrowed her brow, trying to keep her emotions in check. Will was influenced by those around him whether he wanted to admit it or not. Alana often butted heads with Jack over this trait, this chink in Will’s armor.

“I’m not his patient, and he’s not my psychiatrist.” Will explained, “He’s just someone I can talk to when I need an outlet.”

“Like a friend?” Alana pushed, excitement bubbling up. She hadn’t been expecting that turn of events between them, but fully supported it. Having Hannibal as her mentor during her residency had been a godsend, a patient and wise teacher who had helped her become well respected doctor she was today. Will could use someone like that in his life.

“If that’s how you want to look at it I suppose, but I barely know the man.” Will said softly, putting his hood up and adjusting his cloak for full coverage. He needed the space, felt crowded even though it was only Alana here. Checking his phone, Will grimaced, his innards tightening up. It was unsettling to discover he’s been talking to empty chairs for nearly thirty minutes.

A quick mental check of his schedule reminded Will of a large open period after the lunch. It would give him a few hours, enough time to drop in on Hannibal if the doctor had time enough to see him on such short notice.

Alana shrugged in answer, agitating the bird that perched on her shoulder. She could feel Will’s want and need to escape, though you didn’t need to by psychic to notice.“That’s how friendships are made and maintained, Will. You didn’t always know me, still don’t everything about me. There is always something new to learn. A little mystery can be a good thing. Keeps things fresh and interesting.”

“Touché,” Will let her win, shouldering his bag, “Sorry, but you’ll have to excuse me. I need to meet up with our topic of conversation.”
“Business or pleasure?” Alana said with a crooked smile, happy that it made Will smile a little in return.

“I think I’ll just answer ‘yes’ to that and leave you with a little mystery.” Will faked it, knew he could be charming when he had to. Giving a little over-the-shoulder wave to Alana and the peacocks who were starting to get bored and irritable which meant loud, Will made his escape, finding his phone as soon as he deemed it safe to do so. He didn’t want anyone eavesdropping or knowing his whereabouts.

Dialing Hannibal’s number, Will both prayed and feared for an answer. During his one and only visit, the empath had noticed that Hannibal didn’t employ any hired help like a secretary or personal assistant to handle his appointments. It meant unless he caught the doctor between patients, Will probably wasn’t going to be able to talk with Hannibal anytime soon, like right now when he needed him the most. So when on the third ring Will heard the smooth accent coming through, it came as an immense sense of relief, the empath nearly sagging from the sensation like his strings had been cut. He all too quickly agreed to meet up with the man on the phone.

OoOoO

“I’m sorry for barging in.” Will started to say as soon as he entered the office, Hannibal closing the door behind him.

“Please do not apologize. Your timing could not have been better. One of my patients was forced to cancel their appointment without notice despite my 24 hour notice policy. So I have a good portion of the afternoon unexpectedly free now, and having you over for company would be a welcomed way to spend it.” Hannibal lied. The wendigo had made a very quick meal out of that poor unfortunate soul, whose only sin had been having a standing appointment with Hannibal in the time slot Will had wanted to drop in on. That and not being important enough in life to be truly missed or kept alive.

“Thank you.” Will closed his eyes, an eerie sense of relief once again washing over him as he sat down. Not wanting to seem rude for once, the empath got up to divest himself of his scarlet cloak and gloves, remembering they were unnecessary in Hannibal’s presence. It seemed to please the older man, the doctor taking the items from Will with a slight smile before neatly folding them.

“Whether here or at home, my door is always open to friends.” Hannibal said, liking how his select choice of words affected Will, who was now lacking his armor. The cloak and gloves was well out of reach, far closer to Hannibal than the empath who dearly needed them whether he knew it or not. “What seems to be troubling you? You sounded distressed over the phone when we spoke.”

“Did I?” Will mumbled, feeling naked without his clothe armor. He tugged at his frayed sweater’s cuffs. He wished he had remembered to wear something nicer. He preferred to dress for comfort over appearance, the latter unnecessary due to his everyday apparel. Looking past Hannibal, he let his eyes skim over the art arranged behind the doctor, his gaze finally settling on the sculpture of a stag. “I was trying not to be too obvious. My general personality tends to be a little on the nervous side. Perhaps you just don’t know me well enough yet, the little mystery of me.”

“That is true but it was the sound of relief in your voice when I told you I had time that gave you away,” Hannibal said, careful to keep his tone neutral, “You are made rude by fear, Will, but there is nothing for you to be afraid of in this room.”

Hannibal was nothing if not honest, even if he did tend to twist, blur, and fog actual events to his benefit. At least not now, the wendigo mused to himself. Will was safe as houses with him, far too interesting to dispatch or make a meal out of. “You sought me out for a reason today, but you don’t have to say anything if you have no wish to. When you are ready, I can assure you there will be no judgment or unsolicited advice on my part.”

“That doesn’t sound like the usual psychiatric advice.” Will challenged.

“It was not meant to. It is a simple offer from a friend.” Hannibal savored the uncomfortable shift in Will’s persona. Companionship was so common amongst humans, longed for on a deep biological level, and yet the empath was made so uncomfortable by the simple offer of a friend, of having someone in his corner.

“My spirit guide has abandoned me.” Was Will’s quiet admittance, the words tasting sour on his tongue as the venom of betrayal seeped through his veins.

“Abandoned?” Hannibal turned the word over in his mouth, letting the edge of curious concern shape his mask. Will Graham truly was a delightful enigma. “I thought you told me your guide had made itself known to you last night. It seems unlikely to so quickly assume the ravenstag would leave you upon presenting himself, not after all this time.”

While Will took a moment to absorb Hannibal’s words, the wendigo amused himself by watching the empath. He memorized the tense set of Will’s shoulders, the furrow in his brow, and the slight pout in his bottom lip. The anxiety that danced through skittish, stormy blue eyes was particularly lovely, Hannibal hoping he could translate it all onto paper later on.

Hannibal had to distract himself, not wanting to give anything away. Will didn’t know.
He wasn’t aware that Hannibal had come to see him the night prior, which meant his visit had been prevented by some unknown force that was interested in Will as well. That didn’t sit well with Hannibal, though he was looking forward to the challenge of finding this force and then dispatching it.

The wendigo tried not to preen at the thought of Will going to look for him, or the empath’s misery when he hadn’t shown up. Hannibal realized he would have given a lot to witness Will waking up to find him gone. The wendigo yearned to see the look of broken hurt on the empath’s face upon realizing that he was alone. Hannibal wanted to see all that desire and longing for him again.

“I went looking. He wasn’t there.” Will scoffed. Perhaps the ravenstag had never been, the strange creature just a drunken dream of hope, made from the fine wine he had drank in excess and a deranged mind breaking down.

“Wasn’t there or you simply couldn’t find him? Which is it?” Hannibal challenged, earning a look from the empath.

“I know myself, know where to look in my crooks, crannies, and corners. I searched for him, felt out the inner cogs and working of my mind for his presence and found nothing.” Will said with rare confidence, though he’d love Hannibal to prove him wrong. To some relief, Hannibal seemed to consider this, obviously weighing the information carefully in his mind before offering any further opinion on the matter. Will found himself rather liking Hannibal deliberate care with words, knowing the importance of them, the merit of their formation.

“Not much is truly known about the habits of spirit guides. Though quite common and an everyday part of an empath’s life, they are as varied and unique as the empaths they belong to.” Hannibal said, “Your own obviously being more unique than others I believe due to your own extraordinary nature. Though it may be hard, try to have some patience with your guide. You both have been absent from each other’s lives for a very long time. Do not be so quick to dismiss this ravenstag.”

“You think he needs some time to settle in?” Will was facing him now, giving Hannibal his full attention. The wendigo tried not to bask in it, even as Will huffed, looking disgruntled but far less upset now by his perceived guide’s absence. Hannibal was pleased to see that his explanation was having the effect he had intended. Will’s mind would be far more open to him. Now all Hannibal had to do was deal with his unknown foe. “I think he’s had more than enough time for that.”

“Being a spirit guide does not mean they shall reside within the cage of your mind, Will. From what I have read and observed, most are capable of being seen by those around them until their empaths are old enough to suppress their physical form. Your guide is anything but traditional. Perhaps it is seeking to settle a few of the dark energies within your life before securing its place of residence, be that within you or beside you.” Hannibal said, loving how Will’s inner defense seemed to crumble from the mere offer of hope. The wendigo knew he had his man now, his words hooks sinking into Will.

“You finally have a way out of dark places, Will. I have faith in your guide. Give your ravenstag a little more time to make himself known to you.” The wendigo promised.

“I’m sure he will reappear when you least expect it.”

OoOoO

TBC

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading. Your comments go look for the ravenstag, while your kudos hang out with Winston.

End Notes

Thanks for reading. Your comments get lost in mirrors never to be seen again. Your kudos spend the rest of their lives peering into the glass.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!